

SALUTATIONS

- Senator the Honorable Raziah Ahmed, President of the Senate and
Dr. Ahmed
- The Honorable Nizam Baksh, Minister of Public Utilities and Mrs.
Baksh
- Brother Harrypersad Maharaj, President of the Inter Religious
Organization
- Justice Zainool Hosein, Chairman of the Integrity Commission of
Trinidad and Tobago
- Mrs. Zalayhar Hassanali, Former First Lady of the Republic of
Trinidad and Tobago
- Mr. Yacoob Ali, President of ASJA
- Other distinguished members of the Muslim Community
- Embassy Staff

Salaam Alaikum...

...Blessings and welcome...

Thank you, Mufti Muhammad Asrarul Haque for that beautiful recitation from the Holy Quran, and for the opening prayer.

I would like to wish all of you here, the Muslims of Trinidad and Tobago, and by extension the 1.6 billion Muslims around the world *Ramadan Kareem.*

Now, I know that many of you have been waiting a long time to eat and drink...

But, first, I want to say a few words. Just a few...

In this holy month of Ramadan, I join with President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and Ambassadors around the world in opening our home, so that we can break bread together and celebrate Ramadan.

In his official Ramadan statement this year, President Obama said:
“Ramadan is a deeply spiritual time *of reflection and renewal*, meant to increase thankfulness and consciousness of God’s mercy.”

He also said: “The diversity and patriotism of America’s religious communities reminds us of the values we share.”

Like the United States, Trinidad and Tobago is a diverse society that welcomes people of all faiths and all religions. There are Muslims, Hindus, Christians, as well as Buddhists.....All living and working together in peace and respect.

Trinidad and Tobago has a lot to teach the world, especially at a time when intolerance -- in the name of religion, race, ethnicity, *or whatever* -- is a threat to us all. In the United States, we recently saw a horrifying example of this threat, as nine African-American worshippers were murdered -- at a church in Charleston, South Carolina.

During his eulogy for the slain pastor of that church, President Barack Obama said: “Justice rose out of the recognition of ourselves in each other. My liberty depends on your being free, too.”

Religious freedom is enshrined as the First Amendment in our Bill of Rights. That’s how important it was to the people who founded our nation. And, we Americans believe deeply in, not just freedom to worship, but respect for those who practice other faiths.

Ramadan is the month when Muslims come together, with friends and family, co-religionists, *and those* of other faiths...

A time of reflection *and devotion*, discipline *and celebration*...

...It is my pleasure to be sharing this sacred time with you, in what has become a tradition *here* in Trinidad and Tobago over the past several years.

You, the Muslim leaders of Trinidad and Tobago, know the true meaning and mission of Islam: Peace, *respect*, tolerance, *education*,

culture. *These* are what you stand for..., what Trinidad and Tobago stands for, and what Islam stands for...

I thank you... And, I am honored to serve my country here in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, where every creed and race finds an equal place.

...It’s a bold promise, but one which I know every one of you works to uphold.

----Ramadan Kareem---